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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/12/2018  
TAGS: PINR PGOV PINS PTER EG  
SUBJECT: STATE OF PLAY REGARDING EGYPT'S PLANNED  
COUNTER-TERROR LAW (C-CT8-00695)

REF: A. SECSTATE 40507  
    1B. CAIRO 843  
    1C. 07 CAIRO 1638

Classified By: Minister-Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs  
William R. Stewart for Reasons 1.4(B).

1.(C) Summary: There are conflicting reports on the status of the new Counter-Terrorism law, which is expected to come into force when the long-standing Emergency Law expires, absent an extension, on May 31. Some interlocutors tell us the new legislation is on track, while others anticipate an extension of the Emergency Law. In either case, the government has released virtually no information publicly and has been reticent with us regarding both the status and contents of the new CT law. End summary.

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PROSPECTS FOR APPROVAL OF THE NEW CT LAW  
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2.(C) On May 7, Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for Counter-Terrorism Ashraf Mohsen told us that the draft of the CT law had been sent by the inter-ministerial drafting committee to President Mubarak's cabinet for final review. According to Mohsen, the Cabinet may either submit the draft law to Parliament for approval or refer it back to the drafting committee for revision. Mohsen said that even though he is a member of the drafting committee, he does not know when the cabinet will take action. In an April 22 conversation, Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Wael Aboulmagd told us that he expects the Emergency Law to be extended because he envisions a lengthy debate in Parliament before the CT law is approved (ref B).

3.(C) There are, however, other GoE views. On May 8, a group of State Security Investigative Service (SSIS) officials, including General Aly Hegazy, head of the SSIS Office of Foreign Affairs, told us that they expected the CT law to take effect by May 31. They do not expect a long debate in Parliament, pointing out that recently the People's Assembly approved the GoE's unpopular proposal for a fuel tax hike after just one day of debate.

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CONTENTS OF CT LAW/IMPACT ON EMERGENCY LAW DETAINEES  
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4.(C) General Hegazy and his colleagues told us that the security establishment has been preparing for the new CT law "for years" and said it will address detainees currently held under the Emergency Law. They envision a "transition period of weeks" following the implementation of the new CT law during which detainees who have been held without trial (under the Emergency Law) will be quickly brought before judges. They also said that the number of detainees under the Emergency Law has been reduced significantly in recent

years as terrorism suspects were released as a result of ideological "revisions" (ref C). They declined to provide an estimate of the number of detainees currently held under the Emergency Law.

5.(C) The MFA's Mohsen also told us the interagency drafting committee considered the impact of the new CT law on Emergency Decree detainees and included provisions to address their situation. He said he was unable to provide any details on the solution the drafting committee developed.

6.(C) Mohsen told us that portions of the text of the new CT law have been seen by "experts" with whom the drafting committee consulted, but said that the complete text had not been circulated outside of the government. He denied that a purported version of the draft law published in the independent newspaper Al Masry Al Youm on February 20, 2008 was accurate.

7.(SBU) As the May 31 expiration date for the Emergency Law approaches, the media's focus on the issue has intensified. On May 6, according to media reports, the vice-president of the government sponsored National Council on Human Rights (NCHR), Kamal Abdel Magd, objected to the possibility that Parliament will approve the new CT law before the NCHR reviews it, in violation of an alleged GoE agreement with the NCHR. NGO's have begun to campaign against an extension of the Emergency Law with a coalition of 24 human rights organizations releasing a statement on May 7 labeling the old law "an obstacle to comprehensive reform" and urging President Mubarak not to extend it.

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